

Reuben J. Anderson Farm
.1 mi. S of County Rd. 239,
.4 mis. SE of County Rd. 985
Ruckersville vicinity
Elbert County
Georgia

HABS No. GA-32

HABS,
GA,
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PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, DC 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
REUBEN J. ANDERSON FARM

HABS NO. GA-32

Location: .1 mile south of County Road 239, .4 mile southeast of County Road 985, 1.7 miles northeast of the junction of County Roads 266 and 985, Ruckersville vicinity, Elbert County, Georgia.

USGS Rock Branch Quadrangle, Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates, 17.337265.3782904.

Present Owner: Reuben J. Anderson at time of recording. Will be acquired by the United States Army Corps of Engineers in 1981.

Present Use: Residence. Scheduled for demolition.

Significance: The Reuben J. Anderson Farm is an intact farmstead built by a typical independent Piedmont farmer who farmed between 50 and 200 acres after about 1920. Architecturally, the buildings on the farmstead are eclectic variants of traditional southern farm buildings. Agriculturally, they serve as an illustration of the various aspects of traditional Piedmont agriculture, including food storage and preparation, land cultivation, and livestock raising.

PART I: HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1932. This house replaced a late nineteenth century log house, the only structure on the property when Reuben Anderson moved there in 1921.
2. Builder: Built by Reuben J. Anderson with the help of his brother Frank.
3. Original and subsequent owners:

1891 Deed Book KK, p. 396. N. G. Long to John W. McCalla, 808 acres, for \$3,346.

1917 Deed book 5, p. 314. Heirs of John W. McCalla to W. S. Anderson, 197 acres, \$4,945. The parcel was described as: "All that tract or parcel of land beginning at a post oak on Bowman Ferry Road and running thence in $16\frac{1}{2}$ e 4.90 to a rock or stake thence 5.89 w 35.17 to a black gum thence s $51\frac{1}{2}$ w 6.63 to a red oak stump thence n $49\frac{1}{2}$ w 25.12 to a pine thence s $63\frac{1}{2}$ s 25.94 to a stake thence s $50\frac{1}{4}$ w 1.92 to a willow on Big Vans Creek thence along said Vans Creek to a stake on Bowmans Ferry Road thence along said road to the beginning point containing 197.8 acres."

1930 Deed book 15, p. 199. W. S. Anderson to his son Reuben J., approximately \$10 per acre.

4. Original plans and construction: The one-story frame house, built in a bungalow form, has an irregular floor plan with no hall. The interior walls were unpainted horizontal boards.
5. Alterations and additions: The siding on the house was replaced ca. 1947-50. The weatherboarding on the house was removed and renailed to make a flat surface and then asbestos shingles were laid on top. The front porch was altered with the help of Joe McMullen ca. 1955. The old porch with hipped roof and wooden floor was replaced by a gable-roofed porch with concrete floor.

Electricity was installed ca. 1948. Interior plumbing was added ca. 1951-52 when Mrs. Anderson was taken ill and was housebound. A bathroom was installed in the southeast bedroom.

B. Historical Context

The Reuben Anderson Farm is an excellent example of an often overlooked segment of the twentieth-century farm population in the Piedmont Region: independent farmers with medium-sized farms of 50 to 200 acres. These farmers practiced subsistence farming, had no tenants, and accumulated little material wealth. They remained in the same locations in the depopulated Upper Savannah River region from the early twentieth century to the present, building and expanding farmsteads, and the built landscape has been significantly changed as a result.

When Reuben Anderson moved onto his farm in 1930, there were two tenant farmers in his immediate vicinity, and only a few farmers who owned their own land in the neighborhood. Boll weevil damage to cotton crops in 1920 and 1925 had caused many farmers in the area to give up farming and move out. As land in the neighborhood was put up for sale between 1900 and 1930 it was purchased primarily by members of the McCalla family until that family owned almost all of the land between R. J. Anderson's farm and the Savannah River, from 2 miles north of his farm "all the way down to Heardmont," a total of more than 3000 acres (R.J. Anderson).

Reuben J. Anderson, son of Walton S. and Ludie Laura Anderson, was born in 1897 near Harmony in northeastern Elbert County. Sometime after the turn of the century, Walton Anderson and his family moved to the Heardmont neighborhood. By 1920 he had accumulated 851 acres, including the Bedford Harper farm, which he purchased in 1906, and the 195-acre Dr. Long place,

which he had purchased in 1917. Walton Anderson lost most of his land in the depression crash of 1929, when he was unable to meet his loan payments. He sold all but 250 acres of his land; the parcels he retained included his land in Heardmont, the Old Harper farm east of the R. J. Anderson Farm, and the land immediately west of R. J.'s (R.J. Anderson).

In 1921, Reuben Anderson married Dora McCullough, daughter of Henry and Bessie McCullough of rural Iva, South Carolina. They eventually had eight children. After their marriage they lived with his parents for six months; then in the fall of 1921 they moved to the present farmsite which at that time was owned by his father. In about 1925 he bought 25 acres of woodland to the east of his property line on the old Harper place from his father for \$600. In 1930, R. J. purchased the 156-acre farm for \$10 an acre from his father with money borrowed from his brother Frank. He paid off his loan within two years, and then built a new house on the property in 1932. Between 1932 and 1940 he built all of the outbuildings on the farm except the blacksmith shop. Anderson continued to acquire land, buying up over 200 acres of neighboring land over the next twenty years.

Reuben Anderson describes himself as "never wanting much," content with enough land to provide a comfortable living for his family. He "never fooled with no hands;" his sons helped him farm, and as they grew up and left the farm he gradually scaled down his operation. He and his sons built most of his buildings by themselves, without help from their neighbors. His independence is also reflected in the fact that he never stayed in debt long and rarely bought anything on credit. During the depression years there was very little hard cash available but plenty to eat since the family raised most of its own food.

Much of his original 156-acre farm was woodland, and was gradually cleared as timber was needed for building and fuel. Little capital investment was required to improve and expand the farmstead; Reuben Anderson's father had a steam-powered sawmill on his land southeast of R. J.'s farmstead. Planed lumber such as that used in the interior of the house came from the sawmill run by Erastus (Rass) Ward east of Ruckersville about four miles from Reuben Anderson's farm. Ward ran the sawmill, a corn mill, and a cotton gin from sometime before 1915 until 1942. There were no carpenters or master-builders in the area at this time. Rather, most buildings were built cooperatively with the most talented workmen supervising the building process and everyone helping. Thus most of the young men in the neighborhood gained carpentry skills without special training or apprenticeship.

Reuben Anderson's farmland consisted mainly of bottom land, so he planted very little cotton after 1921, usually about six acres and never more than fifteen. Most of his cultivated land was planted in corn, with smaller acreages in a variety of crops. He also had a garden plot. He had three kinds of livestock - hogs, goats and cattle. He began his goat herd in 1940 or 1941 with two goats, and shortly thereafter bought ten or twelve more from Paul Cleveland. Thereafter, the herd grew by natural increase until there were about 100 in the herd. The goats served two purposes on the farm: they provided meat for the family, and they kept the grass on the cleared pastureland cropped so that land not in cultivation did not have to be maintained. R. J. Anderson kept goats on the farm until ca. 1970. He began with one milk cow in 1925, and gradually accumulated a dairy herd until he had a dozen jersey milk cows ca. 1940. In 1945, he "quit foolin' with milk cows" and converted to a beef cattle operation. Reuben Anderson's son Wade now raises 50 to 65 beef cattle on the farm.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement (Main House):

The house is a rectangular bungalow type with the entrance in the north gable end. The one-story house has a brick and cinder-block foundation. The conventional stud framing is covered with light green asbestos shingles. The front porch, recessed under the roof of the house, has a concrete slab floor and wood posts. The rear porch is enclosed, with plastic over the windows. There are two adjacent front doors, which are paneled wood with three vertical lights. Windows in the house have six-over-six-light and four-over-four-light sash. The gable roof, with ridge running north-south, is covered with standing-seam metal. The eaves overhang 12".

Much of the original furniture still remains in the house. The bedrooms were furnished with iron beds and storebought dressers, with the exception of the master bedroom, which had cedar furniture custom-made by Tom Rhoades. According to Azalee Anderson McMullen, Rhoades was about 90 years old ca. 1938, and he lived with the family until he had finished the furniture. Homemade dining room tables with benches on each side are located in the kitchen and on the back porch. The rocking chairs and straight-backed chairs were made by Jesse Grimes, a black man who lived in the neighborhood. Hannah Anderson Hurlong remembered whitewashing the hearth as part of the weekly cleaning chores.

B. Site

1. General setting and orientation:

The house is located about 260' south of the road. The farm buildings are located east, south, and west of the house, where the land slopes away. A pond with earth dam is located about 1200' south of the house. A spring is located about 500' south of the house in a stand of hardwoods. Until destroyed by disease ca. 1970, a peach orchard occupied the first terrace east of the house. North of the yard was a flower garden.

2. Outbuildings

- a. Corn crib: This structure was built ca. 1917-18 as an addition to the log house which is no longer extant. In 1932, this addition was converted to a freestanding structure and used to store corn. The structure measures 15'-8" x 15'-10", and has a stone foundation, log sills, and 2" x 8" joists. The frame construction has 3" diameter logs 2' on center, with diagonal bracing and weatherboard siding. The gable roof is framed with 2" x 3" rafters with a shake roof.

- b. Mule barn and granary:

The mule barn, built by R. J. Anderson ca. 1932, incorporates the old Bedford Harper log kitchen. This kitchen was formerly situated on the Harper farm adjoining the R. J. Anderson farm to the east, and probably dates from the antebellum period. The log kitchen and the frame bay behind it were used as granaries for wheat and oats, while the three stalls on the north, separated by a breezeway, housed mules; the loft was used to store hay. R. J. Anderson began farming with one mule in 1920, bought his second mule in 1928, and added a third and later a fourth mule sometime after 1938 (Elbert County Tax Digests).

The structure is in good repair with some of the exterior siding missing. It is rectangular, measuring 48'-0" x 28'-4" including the enclosed shed additions on the west and south. Three stalls on the north end, measuring 11'-6" x 28'-4", are separated from the main part of the structure by an 8'-6" wide breezeway. The main structure consists of the 20'-5" x 20'-3" log kitchen. The shed addition on the south is 7'-3" wide and the one on the north is 8'-3" wide.

The foundations are granite with 10" x 8" log sills placed on and between the stones. Most of the barn is of conventional stud framing using 2" x 4"s, 2" x 6"s, and 4" x 4" posts. The log kitchen uses half-dovetail joints with 12" x 5" members. This kitchen contains the finest example of half-dovetail jointing in the project area.

The exterior walls are sheathed in 4½" wide weather-board siding, except on the logs which have standing seam metal. The doors are vertical planks with horizontal bracing and connected by recessed hinges. There are no windows. The gable roof is covered with standing-seam metal roofing with the ridge running north-south. The shed roofs are also standing seam metal.

- c. Well House: The well house measures 8'-2" x 9'-1" and has cut granite walls. The gable roof is covered with asphalt shingles. The floor is concrete. The door is located to the southwest and there is a window on the northeast elevation.

- d. Cow Barn:

The main body of the barn was built ca. 1935 by R. J. Anderson. The sheds on the east and south of the building were added ca. 1938-39. The barn has a main floor and two lofts, with three stalls and a granary on the east and four stalls on the west. The sheds on the barn are equipped with hay racks and wooden feed troughs in which hay and hammered corn were fed to the cows.

The cow barn, one-story with two lofts, is in excellent shape with overall dimensions of 42'-6" x 41'-2" including an open shed addition on the south and an enclosed shed on the east.

The foundations consist of brick and stone piers with log sills. The construction is conventional framing using 2" x 4" studs and 4" x 8" second-floor joists adapted from another structure. The exterior sheathing consists of 5" wide weatherboard siding on the main barn and board and batten siding on the east shed. The south shed has some vertical boards on the upper half of the walls. The interior 4" x 6" posts supporting the hay loft rest on a 4"x 12" sill.

The gable roof is covered with standing-seam metal with the ridge running north-south. Roof rafters are 4" x 4", 2'-6" on center. The shed roofs are covered with standing-seam metal.

The plan of the barn consists of an aisle with four stalls to the west, three stalls to the east. The enclosed shed addition is east of these stalls. On the south, the shed roof which shelters the feeding area and two hay racks is supported by four log posts. There are two levels of lofts above the stalls with the top level not being used. The loft flooring consists of 3/4" x 7" tongue and groove planks. The interior walls are covered with 1" x 14" planks running horizontally. The interior doors are plank with steel recessed hinges.

e. Garage:

The garage was built onto a smokehouse in 1934 or 1935 and was a multipurpose building with a partitioned sweet potato-storage space in the back of the garage interior and a transverse alley for machinery storage between the garage and the smokehouse. The smokehouse was replaced by a frame-and-chicken-wire chicken pen. A doghouse was added to the southeast side of the garage soon after the garage was built.

The garage is of conventional stud framing with a cemented granite-block foundation. It measures 25' x 26'. The gable roof, with a standing seam metal covering, has a ridge running northeast-southwest. The walls are covered with standing seam metal placed horizontally. The 19' x 25' shed addition on the southwest rear includes the machinery storage alley and the chicken pen. The roof is standing seam metal.

f. Cotton Storage Shed:

Built by R. J. Anderson ca. 1935, the building was used for storing cotton before it was ginned. The shed addition on the northwest was added ca. 1948 by R. J. Anderson.

The cotton storage shed is of conventional framing on stone piers with 5" wide weatherboard siding. The main structure is 16'-5" x 18'-0" with an 18'-0" x 13'-0" shed addition to the northwest. The gable roof is covered with standing-seam metal with the ridge running northeast-southwest. The sills and joists are logs with the sills 10" in diameter and the joists 6" in diameter, 3'-0" on center.

g. Chicken Coop and Potato Storage Shed:

The chicken coop was built by R. J. Anderson ca. 1935-40. In addition to raising sweet potatoes, R. J. Anderson raised about a quarter of an acre of Irish potatoes, which were stored in the main portion of this structure. The potatoes were spread on the dirt floor and sprinkled with lime to absorb moisture and help preserve them through the winter months.

The one-story main structure is 26'-3" x 16'-4" with a 7'-7" x 12'-3" addition on the southwest. The structure is of conventional stud framing with board and batten siding. There are dirt floors and brick foundations. The shed roof is covered with standing-seam metal.

h. Hog Pen:

Built by R. J. Anderson ca. 1950, this was the second granite structure to be built on the farm. Located just northeast of the cow barn, the hog pen is 10'-0" x 9'-0" with granite walls and a shed roof sloping to the east. The building is divided into two rooms by a wood partition with doors side by side on the east and a window at each end. It was constructed of "found" pieces of quarried granite and has a poured cement floor.

i. Hay Rack:

The hay rack was built ca. 1940 by R. J. Anderson who calls this structure a "goat rack." The two-story structure was used to store hay for feeding his goat herd. Since the structure is hanked, hauled hay could be loaded into the hay rack from the hillside, or hay could be pitched into the structure from the meadow beneath.

The hay rack measures 24'-0" x 16'-0" and is two stories high, hanked into a hill. The conventional stud framing is covered with vertical boards. The gable roof is covered with standing-seam metal and the ridge runs east-west. The feeding racks are located underneath a loft which was used for hay storage. The loft can be entered from ground level on the east. The upper half of the rack is enclosed, with a loft door near the peak on both gables. The west wall extends to the ground to protect the hay rack, while the first floor is open on the east side.

j. Blacksmith Shop:

The original blacksmith shop was located below the well house. This shop, a rectangular frame structure, was built in 1958 to replace it, keeping the same wood-fired forge.

The blacksmith shop measures 14'-2" x 12'-2". It sits on piers with 8" log sills. The conventional stud framing is covered with weatherboard siding 5½" wide. The gable roof is covered with standing-seam metal and the ridge runs north-south.

k. Hog-dressing post: This structure, two poles and a cross timber with large metal hooks hanging down, was used to clean hogs after butchering. Also still on the farm is a large cast-iron pot used to boil water to scald the hogs.

l. Privy: The privy, a crude bench sheltered by an Oldsmobile truck hood, was constructed because Mr. Anderson was reluctant to use the indoor toilet when it was first installed.

Prepared by:
LeAnne Baird
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HABS
Summer 1981

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Interviews:

Joe McMullen and Azalee Anderson McMullen, interviewed August 16, 1980, at their home in rural Elbert County.

Reuben J. Anderson, interviewed August 11, 1980, at his home in rural Elbert County.

Reuben J. Anderson and Hannah Anderson (Mrs. George) Hurlong, interviewed August 12, 1980, at Mr. Anderson's home in rural Elbert County.

B. Unpublished sources:

Elbert County Deed Records

Elbert County Marriage Records

Elbert County Tax Digests, 1921-1950

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Research Files, Real Estate
Office, Elberton, Georgia

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The documentation of the historic resources within the Richard B. Russell Dam project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), of the National Architectural and Engineering Record (NAER), a division of the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service (HCRS), in cooperation with HCRS's Interagency Archeological Services (IAS), Atlanta, Georgia, and cosponsored by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Savannah District Office in compliance with Executive Order 11593 as a mitigative effort in construction of the dam. The project was executed under the direction of Robert Kapsch, Chief of NAER; John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS; and Kenneth L. Anderson, Principal Architect, in the HABS field office, Elberton, Georgia.

Recording was conducted during the summer of 1980 by Richard J. Cronenberger (staff architect), project supervisor; LeAnne Baird (University of Nebraska), project historian; Marcie L. Robertson (University of Georgia), assistant historian; Dennis M. O'Kain (University of Georgia), project photographer; Reginald A. Berry (staff architect), foreman; William F. Hand (Auburn University), foreman; and student architects Carol B. DeGroote (University of Maryland), Dale R. Gerber (University of Minnesota), Cynthia Wilson-Glicksman (University of Arizona), and Mark Schara (University of Michigan). The Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) historian was John P. Johnson. The clerk-typist was Teena Kenimer (University of Georgia). The written data were edited in the HABS Washington Office by Alison K. Hoagland in February 1981.